Presentation Outline

- Our Team + Project Timeline

- Brickbottom History + Context

- Current Conditions + Site Analysis

- Related Plans

- Visions for the Site

- Next Steps

- Q&A + Feedback
Introduction
Who We Are

- 13 Students (12 MIT DUSP and 1 Harvard GSD) enrolled in a semester-long practicum class

- Variety of experience and skills, from urban design to transportation development
Project Timeline

September - October
- Meet with client
- Research + analyze site
- Begin to develop vision

October - November
- Gain insight from key stakeholders
- Get ideas + feedback, work into proposals

November - December
- Build final report
- Present report & get final feedback
- Deliver to the city to guide future planning
History & Context
Brickbottom in 1938
Regional centrality
Identified as a transformational area in SomerVision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Acres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assembly Square</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner Belt</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brickbottom</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boynton Yards</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Square</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>365</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: City of Somerville SomerVision Comprehensive Plan, 2012; Bing maps
Transportation networks and proposed Somerville Community Path

- Somerville Ave
- McGrath Highway
- Kirkland Washington
- Union Square
- Green Line Extension
- Existing Green Line
- Gilman Square
- Somerville Community Path
- Orange Line
- I-93
- Science Park
Current Conditions: What We’ve Heard

**Assets**
- Strong sense of community in Artist Building
- Great location

**Challenges**
- Redevelopment pressure inconsistent with current strengths
- Inadequate road infrastructure
- Aesthetics
- Poor stormwater management
Site Edges

- **Railway lines** create barriers for cars and pedestrians alike

- **McGrath Highway** serves as a pedestrian and car barrier

“Somerville’s highway and railroad corridors divide our neighborhoods and prevent residents from enjoying open spaces and supporting local businesses.”

- **SomerVision Comprehensive Plan, 2012**
Industrial Zoning

- Study area currently zoned entirely IA industrial
- By far largest remaining industrial zone in Somerville
A Mix of Uses

- Brickbottom’s local businesses include manufacturing, storage, auto sales and service

- Dispatching and response center for NSTAR, Cataldo Ambulance, and Eastern Bus
Artist Presence

- Brickbottom Artist Building and Joy Street Studios create artists presence

- Brickbottom is the sole residential element (150 condo units)
Urban Design Challenges and Assets

Brickbottom presents a number of urban design challenges, particularly in the area of walkability and the streetscape. Some elements, however, such as the wide streets, could be seen as assets.

1. Narrow / non-existent sidewalks
2. Fences, parking lots facing street
3. Wide undifferentiated streets
4. Blank facades
Block Size

Winter Hill

Union Square

Brickbottom / McGrath
**Neighborhood Changes**

Area in transition:
- the waste transfer station was recently removed
- plans to de-elevate the McGrath highway
- plans to construct a Green Line stop
- plans for a Somerville Community Path
SomerVision designates Brickbottom as an “Area to Transform”

SomerVision 2030 Goals

30,000 New Jobs as part of a responsible plan to create opportunity for all Somerville workers and entrepreneurs.

125 New Acres of Publicly-Accessible Open Space as part of our realistic plan to provide high-quality and well-programmed community spaces.

6,000 New Housing Units - 1,200 Permanently Affordable as part of a sensitive plan to attract and retain Somerville’s best asset: its people.

50% of New Trips via Transit, Bike, or Walking as part of an equitable plan for access and circulation to and through the City.

85% of New Development in Transformative Areas as part of a predictable land use plan that protects neighborhood character.

This means at least:
- 4,500 jobs
- 750 units of housing (or up to 1,200 according to the mayor’s recent Sustainable Neighborhoods plan)
- 16 acres of new open space

Brickbottom should also contribute significantly towards the 50% of new trips via transit, bike, or walking goal, given the area’s accessibility to the future Green Line Extension and Community Path.
Grounding McGrath

MassDOT recommended the “Boulevard Alternative”

Current plans provide for two drive lanes in each direction and one park lane in each direction.

Green Line Extension

[Map showing the Green Line Extension with stops at College Ave, Ball Sq., Lowell St., Gilman Sq., Washington St., Union Sq., and Lechmere.]

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Line_Extension
CURRENT PROPOSED SITE PLAN

Somerville Community Path

Community Path

Sustainable Neighborhoods Plan

- Increased housing goals in SomerVision from 6,000 to 9,000
- Expanded inclusionary zoning ordinances
- Family housing and workforce housing
- Maker/artist live-work zoning

Takeaways

- SomerVision
- Grounding McGrath
- Green Line Extension
- Community Path
- Sustainable Neighborhoods
- Targeted development
- New jobs
- Open space
- Transit oriented
- Pedestrian friendly
- Connectivity
- Housing
Visions for the Site
**Changes to McGrath**

- No new developable area
- All extra space for open space

- Some new developable area
- Some open space

- All extra space for new development
- No new open space
What We’ve Heard

- Key issue is zoning

- Huge demand for future development in Brickbottom

- Commercial development is critical for tax base

- Need vertical development at urban scale

- Need mixed-use development

- Build upon current uses

- Use “creative energies” from Artists’ Building and Joy St. Studios
Preliminary Visions

Past Plans & Reports

SomerVision values & goals

Current Conditions

What We’ve Heard / Early Interviews

1. Focus: Light Industry
2. Focus: Arts and Culture
3. Focus: Office
4. Focus: Housing
Framing a Discussion

- Each vision focuses on a particular use to create a site “character”

- Basis for discussion: not definite or finalized

- Each can accommodate affordable housing and open space

1. Focus: Light Industry
2. Focus: Arts and Culture
3. Focus: Office
4. Focus: Housing
Focus: Light Industry

- Preserves light industry (warehouse, depot, and manufacturing) alongside infill, while improving public realm

- Can create opportunities for more flexible “maker space,” where smaller operations and hobbyists share resources

- Opportunity for public engagement (through classes) and workforce development
Focus: Light Industry

PROS
- Maintains “funkiness”
- Builds on industrial strengths
- Meets SomerVision housing needs
- Provides affordable business space

CONS
- Light industry may be unattractive to other sectors
- Truck traffic may conflict with pedestrian environment
Focus: Arts and Culture

- Incorporate destination arts center and gallery space

- Create a corridor linking new amenities with T station, Brickbottom Artists’ Building, Joy St. Studios

- Incorporate affordable “work/live” space
Focus: Arts and Culture

PROS
Maintains “funkiness”
Creates a regional destination
Provides affordable artist housing

CONS
Uncertain impact on tax revenue and job creation
Financing may be difficult
Focus: Office

- Could target “green” or specialized industries

- Set aside space for startups and small businesses

- Capitalize on proximity to universities and downtown Boston

- Mix with residential and retail to stimulate activity outside of working hours
Focus: Office

PROS
- Generates tax revenue for city services
- Integrates into regional office network

CONS
- Possibly less evening or weekend activity
- Less of a fit with “funky” vibe
- Site may not be ideal for office
Focus: Housing

- Prioritizes housing, including family housing
- Resident-oriented mix of uses with neighborhood-scale retail
Focus: Housing

PROS
Provides greater housing diversity
Re-knits residential neighborhoods
Generates local neighborhood activity

CONS
Less impact on tax revenue and job goals
Higher impact on city services
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Thank You

Special thanks to George Proakis & Lori Massa

Contact us at 11.360@mit.edu
Questions

- Which of the 4 visions we presented do you find most compelling?

- What information surprised you?

- What do you think we should change?